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SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: ELECTIONS 2007 WEEKLY ROUNDUP OCTOBER  
1-5

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[1](#)B. BUENOS AIRES 01931  
[1](#)C. BUENOS AIRES 01351  
[1](#)D. BUENOS AIRES 00126

Classified By: AMBASSADOR E. ANTHONY WAYNE FOR REASONS 1.4 (b)  
and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The latest polls confirm that Senator and Victory Front (FPV) presidential candidate Cristina Kirchner maintains a healthy lead over her closest challengers. Senator Kirchner's campaign continues to focus on foreign policy and travel, while downplaying domestic issues. The opposition presidential candidates have continued to broadcast their messages, but they are finding it hard to conduct a real campaign against the frontrunner, who remains above the fray. END SUMMARY.

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For Whom the Polls Toll  
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[1](#)2. (U) A round of polls published in local press September 30 to October 1 confirm that Senator and Victory Front (FPV) presidential candidate Cristina Kirchner maintains a substantial lead over her closest challengers. The pro-Kirchner daily Pagina 12 published results from five polling firms contracted by the government. The average of the five polls show Cristina Kirchner receiving 46 percent of the presidential vote, followed by Elsa Carrio with 13 percent, Roberto Lavagna with 11 percent, and Ricardo Lopez Murphy, Jorge Sobisch and Alejandro Rodriguez Saa each with less than five percent. The same polls contrasted provincial voting preference with those of Buenos Aires city. Kirchner garnered 64 percent, Carrio 11 percent, and Lavagna 5.5 percent in Santa Fe. In Buenos Aires Kirchner registered 35 percent, Carrio 18 percent, and Lavagna 14.5 percent support from potential voters.

[1](#)3. (U) La Nacion newspaper published on October 1 the latest Poliarquia poll, which cited much lower numbers for each candidate and a relatively high rate of undecided (22.7). The poll indicates that an additional 28 percent may yet change their vote. Of undecided voters, 36 percent have not thought about the elections, 16 percent were leaning toward Cristina Kirchner, 10.5 percent were between Cristina and another candidate, and 12 percent would definitely not vote



for Cristina. Former Economy Minister and presidential candidate Roberto Lavagna attacked the polls as being "paid for and manipulated by the government," adding that the government is manipulating the data to show Carrio ahead of him because, he said, the Kirchners fear a runoff against him.

¶4. (SBU) Elisa Carrio, who is expected to finish second in October and polling at approximately 12 percent on average, remains focused on forcing a runoff with front-runner Senator Kirchner. Carrio's campaign has recently focused on demonstrating that she is ready and competent to serve as president. Carrio announced her political platform on September 27, which focus on power sharing, term limits, ethics, social justice, and strengthening of government institutions. She openly challenged President Kirchner to confront Argentina's inflation problem.

¶5. (SBU) Roberto Lavagna, polling around eight percent in general, is also postulating that he will force a runoff with Senator Kirchner. His campaign motto of "How else can I help you?" is focused on reminding voters that as economy minister during the period after the devaluation crisis he was the key architect of Argentina's economic recovery. His campaign pillars include: stabilizing the economy and fighting inflation, fighting poverty, and strengthening government institutions.

¶6. (SBU) San Luis Governor and Peronist alternative candidate Rodriguez Saa, with about five percent support, claims that he would win the presidency easily if he could show Argentines first-hand how his leadership has benefited San Luis province. Neuquen Governor and center-right candidate Jorge Sobisch and center-right candidate Ricardo

Lopez Murphy, each projected to receive less than 5% of the total vote on October 28, round out the presidential candidates included in all the latest polls.

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Cristina's Non-Campaign  
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¶7. (C) Coming off their September 23-29 trip to New York, the Kirchners reportedly plan to cover nearly 7,500 miles the week of October 1 through trips to various Argentine provinces and meetings with Brazilian President Lula Ignacio Da Silva. Senator Kirchner's foreign-policy based campaign has kept the presidential campaign field focused on foreign issues and has created a difficult atmosphere in which the opposition candidates must try to rally voter attention. Esteban Bullrich, vice presidential running-mate of center-right leader Ricardo Lopez Murphy, told us that it is impossible to generate robust debates or attract media attention when the front-runner (Kirchner) is essentially not campaigning domestically.

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Skanska Update  
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¶8. (C) Federal Judge Guillermo Montenegro, in charge of the criminal investigation of alleged bribes in the Skanska case (REF C), announced his resignation September 28 to become the next Minister of Security in the city of Buenos Aires as part of Mayor-Elect Mauricio Macri's team. Montenegro will also bring three key criminal prosecutors with him to his new position. The case's main prosecutor, Carlos Stornelli, is negotiating his eventual move to Buenos Aires province, where gubernatorial candidate and Vice President Daniel Scioli plans to make him Minister of Security. According to sources close to Scioli, Stornelli would prefer to request a leave of absence from his post as prosecutor, but Scioli is pushing for Stornelli to resign his current position as a sign of his commitment to an eventual Scioli administration in the province. Montenegro and Stornelli's departures are expected to severely delay or halt altogether the criminal investigation into the Skanska case, not to mention the



trials of former Kirchner administration officials implicated in the case, Fulvio Madaro and Nestor Ulloa. However, the investigation for tax evasion continues under a separate judge.

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Paper-Mill Dispute Resurges  
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¶9. (SBU) Environmental protestors (REF D) renewed road closures and stepped up protests in response to President Nestor Kirchner being quoted in the press recognizing in New York on September 27 that the controversial Finnish paper pulp plant in Uruguay can no longer be moved. The "asambleistas," as they are known locally, have been protesting and cutting routes into Uruguay regularly over the potentially damaging environmental effects of construction of a paper pulp plant on the shores of the Uruguay river that borders both countries. Several rounds of negotiations, some facilitated by Spanish King Juan Carlos I, have failed to resolve the dispute. Meetings on September 29 in New York between Argentine and Uruguayan officials again were unable to produce an agreement on how to appease the protesters while allowing the plant to operate. The protesters labeled President Kirchner a "traitor" for his reported public statements while in New York and vowed to continue cutting roads and bridges, and to increase their protests in the province of Entre Rios and in Buenos Aires before the presidential elections.

¶10. (SBU) President Kirchner denied on October 1 that Argentina accepts the paper plant's operations on the Uruguay River and expressed surprise that the comment ("the mill is there and nothing can be done about it") was attributed to him, calling the statement "absurd." Kirchner further explained that the Argentine government will press its case against the plant's location in Uruguay next year at the Hague. Local analysts speculate that Kirchner has been postponing a resolution with Uruguay over the paper plant until after the October elections to minimize the political costs to his wife's campaign.

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Chaco and Cordoba  
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¶11. (U) In Chaco province, FPV candidate Senator Jorge Capitanich was certified on October 3 as the winner of the September 16 gubernatorial elections after the official recount revealed his lead over Radical candidate Angel Rozas to be over 4,000 votes. Rozas conceded defeat to Capitanich on October 1 and admitted that, with more than 90 percent of the ballots counted, the gap between the two candidates was insurmountable.

¶12. (U) The controversial vote recount in the contested Cordoba province governor race faced renewed opposition from nominal second-place finisher FPV candidate Luis Juez, who continues to push for a manual recount. The Superior Court of Cordoba on October 3 rejected Juez's petition to annul 600 ballot boxes and to call for new elections. Juez subsequently ordered his representatives to abandon their positions supervising the recount, saying "we are not going to validate this plunder with our presence nor our civic behavior; we cannot permit the staining, the destruction, the censuring, (or) the adulterating (of this election)." The recount is now more than 80% complete, and electoral authorities say they will continue the recount without Juez's observers. Juez said that he plans to take his case to the Supreme Court, which he hopes will invalidate the 6,152 ballot boxes and mandate a new election. Current Vice Governor Juan Schiaretti on September 3 proclaimed himself the winner of the September 2 gubernatorial elections, in which he led Juez by 17,000 votes. Alejandro Mosquera of Schiaretti's camp said to La Nacion on October 3, "Juez knows he lost, that is why he is doing this, his observers have been working in the recount for a month. He was not able to prove that any fraud was committed."



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